

Mail service

1917

# History of Rural Mail Delivery in Canada

BY

GEORGE WILCOX

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*Queen's University at Kingston*

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History of  
Rural Mail Delivery  
in Canada  
To Bystander at the office,  
Window with compliments  
Geo. Wilcox

# The History of Rural Mail Delivery in Canada up to 1918

BY GEO. WILCOX.

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"The Toronto Globe" said, "When the history of Rural Mail Delivery in Canada comes to be written the name of George Wilcox will be closely connected with it."

That item suggested to me that perhaps it would be written, and by somebody not well enough informed to bring out all the facts to make it a full and complete record of the campaign that made such history possible. And inasmuch as George Wilcox, according to the evidences not "hid under a bushel" ought to know more as to how it came about than anybody, it seemed to me to be a very proper procedure if such history were written by George Wilcox, himself.

In about the year 1750 three Wilcox brothers emigrated from Great Britain to New England. My father's grandfather was one of these, and was probably one of the first settlers on the Vermont shore of Lake Champlain. His home, the birthplace of my grandfather Amasa Wilcox, was directly opposite Crown Point, N. Y. State. I am seventy-two years old now, but I have vivid recollections of grandfather's narrations, when I was a child, and with the burning logs in the old-time fireplace in my father's home in Oxford County, Ontario, shining in our faces, of the bear-deer-wolf and other wild animal hunting and trapping and fishing experiences in the Lake Champlain country.

One night the family were awakened by a squeal from the direction of the hog-pen, that was evidently intended to advise the settlers for miles around that a tragedy was being enacted there. The trouble ended, however, when the gun man of the family put a lead bullet into a Mr. Bruin in the act of walking off upright into the adjacent forest with the old sow in his arms. He, however, made a rapid escape into the darkness, and she likewise to her hog-pen quarters.

At the age of about twenty-one years, my grandfather Wilcox married Desdama Post, daughter of Jordan Post and Abigail Lumes his wife, all of Crown Point.

About the year 1810 the Posts and my grandfather's family came to Canada to live, and landed at little York, now Toronto. Mr. Post five years later purchased the acre of land in that city now bounded by King, Yonge, Jordan and Melinda Streets for 4,375 dollars; that acre is worth at this time several million.

My grandfather Wilcox was a mill-wright by trade, and built for himself on the Etobocoke Creek, nine miles west of Toronto city hall, a sawmill.

My father, Truman Wilcox, was born at Crown Point, and came to Etobocoke with his parents at the date above stated. I have heard him tell how he with other neighbors would start out at night-fall up the Etobocoke Creek with team and wagon and spears, and come home in the morning with the wagon box full of lake trout.

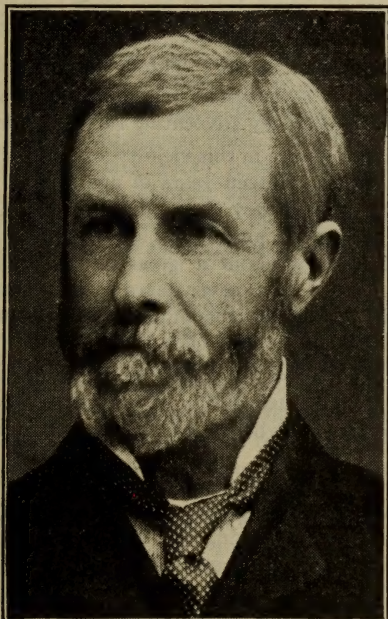
In 1827 there was a considerable settlement in Norwich Township, Oxford County, and among them two of my grandfather's brothers and a few old Crown Point neighbors. They in some way, not by R. M. D., found out that the Government grant to one Colonel Thomson in the Norwich District had been confiscated and was to be sold at auction at Toronto. Some of these men were probably squatters on these lands, but anyhow they started out on the 200-mile journey intent upon having a clear title to some of the Thomson estate. When getting as far on their way as Etobocoke, they stopped over night at my grandfather's home. They gave such glowing accounts of the productiveness of the Norwich soil that in the morning he joined the land-purchasing party, and when the vandue, sale, was over or shortly after, he was the possessor of 750 acres of the Thomson estate at a cost of 937 dollars. It was a virgin forest of stately sugar maples, mostly, except a clearing of forty acres in which was the ruins of an old ashery. Potash making in those days was a business the settlers frequently resorted to for a little ready cash. My mother was the daughter of James and Mary Culham, Trafalgar Township, York Co., Ont.

In 1839 my father, Truman Wilcox, moved from Etobocoke with his family to Norwich and built a home on the sight of the old ashery. Toronto, even at that early date, was evidently destined to become the metropolis of at least Canada West, Ontario's old name. Why he abandoned the advantages that proximity to that then thriving town gave him and the prospects of his becoming, through his mother, the owner of part of the acre noted above, and a home in a well-settled district and on the main thoroughfare between Toronto and the west, on which ran four-horse stages loaded with mail bags and passengers and a road traffic of all sights and sizes, making of his little village a transient stopping place, and came into a dense forest



a hundred miles distant to make his pile farming, is a problem that has always puzzled me.

However, I have never lost any sleep regretting that the Toronto acre got away from the Post-Wilcox family. I have seen the time in my kid days that I put higher value on the maple taffy spread out on snow, in a sap bucket, in my father's sugar bush of a thousand trees, than on that city lot.



*Yours sincerely  
Geo. Wilcox*

I was born December 17th, 1846. Three or four years after this event my grandfather Wilcox came to live at our home. It soon became evident that he and I were fast friends. I set high value on that fact, especially at

such times as when for some conduct on my part, not approved of by my older brothers, they would take after me pell-mell, bent on punishment; I could run though as fast as they and I knew where to run to. My grandfather hearing my screams would sure, with his stout cane in defensive attitude, be holding the door of his apartment, in our home, wide open for me to enter into safety. The boys may, however, have trumped up a case against me to see the fun resulting.

Boy sorrows are soon forgotten. It is memories of happenings of a ludicrous nature that are the stayers and will, in old age, bring the laugh again.

I loved my grandfather dearly. This Thomson purchase has been a home for me and mine for seventy-two years now, and also made it possible for me to devote time and money advocating rural mail delivery for Canada.

My school days were put in in this vicinity, except a short term at Woodstock College when about eighteen years of age. A lot of students there, however, got more for their money than I did. I am very sure that I was not a brilliant student, but if any of my fellow college boys accomplished more in the way of bringing about a great reform in any department of public service than I did, I have never heard of it. I make this statement, not in boastful spirit, but for the encouragement of farmers' boys who cannot keep the pace with faster young class-mates.

At the age of twenty-two I became the husband of a member of the Harris Street Harris family, Oxford Co.; at the age of fifty-five I, too, as did my grandfather years and years before, became interested in a land-purchasing proposition.

In the fall of 1900 one Ira Bently, an old acquaintance of mine, had a letter in a local newspaper stating that where he was living in Bay County, Michigan, good farm land requiring but little labor in clearing could be bought for about five dollars an acre. Although having a farm of 150 acres here, we considered that more land would, perhaps, be good business. I packed my grip and started for Michigan and found the land situation as Mr. Bentley had stated. He, however, was too advanced in years to make a success of his pioneer venture. One of the regrets of my life is that I was never financially able to, in some measure, repay him and others for their constant friendship and concern for our welfare during our stay in Michigan. I made a deal for 120 acres, but my son Walter, for whom I intended the farm, did not take the stock in it that I had hoped for. A farm in Michigan was not what he was after. However, I determined to try my hand at making log-heaps in Uncle Sam's country and clearing up some land for him.



So it came about that in the Spring of 1902 at 3 o'clock one morning my wife, who was to follow in two weeks, opened our road gate to let me pass out with our old family horse, Fred, hitched to a vehicle loaded with light settler's effects, into the highway and darkness bound for the land of my forefathers and to a place therein 250 miles distant.

It was my intention to load at Port Huron the whole outfit on a Bay City boat. There was, I found, no lake traffic between these cities. The Port Huron Customs Officer said that I could "Keep right on going with horse and rig, good direct road all the way to Bay City." I took his advice and five days later, delayed by rain storms, I and my outfit turned off Uncle Sam's highway into where was a little log house surrounded by an acre or so of a clearing. In my pocket was a deed that gave me a right to set up farming or most any other business there. My farm was on the outskirts of a cleared-up settlement and within a half mile from school and a little store, two and a half from a growing village, Bentley, on a branch of the Michigan Central Railway. I could see the Saginaw Bay twelve miles distant and a lot of the country on the settlement side. We named the purchase Clear View Farm.

If a married man gets into his head a speculation scheme, his wife is most sure to cite him to a lot of cases where disaster followed such business. Spurred on by this consideration I immediately proceeded to make our log abode as habitable as possible, for my wife was due there in a week after my arrival. I had sent on ahead by freight some house furnishings. She came as arranged and found me and old Fred hauling the scattering logs the lumbermen had left, into heaps, to await a brisk wind to fan the consuming fires.

Wild thimble berries, huckleberries and black currants were abundant. This solved the fruit problem for us. I look back upon our sojourn in Uncle Sam's country that season as being a very enjoyable experience. The majority of the people there were natives of Canada, and we soon became quite intimate with some smart and good families, neighbors.

Upon our return to our Canadian home that fall we found that our son Walter had decided to tackle the Michigan venture, and in January of that winter he and his wife moved out there and started housekeeping in the log house we had vacated the fall before. It was arranged that in the spring I would take out a carload of farm implements, live stock and other settler's effects, to them. This I did, and found him busy clearing and building a new home out of timber left by the lumber company of whom I purchased the farm. My wife arrived by train in a week after I did, for it was

our intention to put in another summer season of pioneer life there. Clearing land was our chief concern, and that season a lot of smoke that had been imprisoned in the forest trees on Clear View Farm for a hundred years or more, mingled with the clouds and sailed away. A very delightful spectacle for a fellow who desired greatly that his farm deal should pan out profitably. We were all happy, for evidently there was good prospects that a prosperous farming business would soon be a going concern there, and such it has turned out to be; though the man who is farming it is handicapped by having but one natural leg, the other was buried one sad night by the light of a lantern.

We were pulling stumps with a lever, the chain broke, the lever flew back and crushed his leg, necessitating amputation. This happened during his first summer there, and our second, it was, you may depend, a very sad experience. Our happiness turned suddenly to overwhelming sorrow. For my part I had got enough of Michigan and proposed that we all get out of it right away. Walter, however, said "No, it's a good farm and I may make a go of it yet."

My wife and I went back to our home in Canada that fall, rented out the old farm for a term of years, and in the spring returned to Michigan to help our unfortunate boy.

In about 1890 Edwin Shriver, of Westminster, Maryland, U. S., started a campaign for rural mail delivery in the United States. In 1891 Postmaster-General John Wanamaker is said to have received an appropriation of a few thousand dollars to start some trial routes, but for some reason there was nothing doing until in 1892. As stated in one of my newspaper articles, Mortimer Whitehead, a Granger, went before a committee of Congress and secured an appropriation of sixty thousand dollars, and then rural mail delivery started on its blessed mission in the U.S.

The summer of that year, 1905, was the third one wife and I put in under the Stars and Stripes "just to help the boy," and a little grandchild that came the summer before. In the spring of that year while in the Bentley post office one morning, I noticed tacked up on the wall an advertisement by the U. S. Post Department, calling for tenders for carrying mails on a proposed rural mail route, starting from that town. I was pleased to see that Walter's home was on the designated route. Agents from Bay City, thirty miles distant, and Saginaw, taking orders for mail boxes and daily newspapers got busy in the neighborhood, and it soon came about that where fifteen years before was an almost trackless forest, the rural mail delivery man was daily going his rounds.

He had not, however, been on his job very long before I discovered that our daily paper and other mail coming to our home in such fashion

was something to be mightily pleased over, especially by a fellow who when at home in Canada had to put up a tramp of 800 miles every year in order to get his newspaper and other mail daily from the post office and who had distant neighbors that to get to such office for such purpose had to make a journey of eight miles the single trip or 2,500 miles yearly, and just such stunts and more were being enacted all over Canada, and yet no one, as far as I know, had ever made any continued effort to get the great service going here in Canada.

By the fall of that year (1905) our Michigan farm holding had enlarged to 160 acres. Clearing was still an important item with us, and away back on the last forty bought and on the edge of, as yet, an uninhabited tract of thousand of acres of bush land, the spectacle could be seen day after day of a white-haired man of nearly sixty winters, begrimed by smoke and flying cinders and various other accessories incidental to such an occupation, the sweat trickling down his wrinkled face, and who if in a corn-field would (if any scarecrow ever did) frighten away the most audacious crow. Log heaps on fire and in all stages of construction and destruction, chains, axe, hand-spikes, and sturdy horse. He did not look it, but that man had a scheme up his sleeve that before many moons millions of his fellow countrymen would read about it in the newspapers, and members of the Ottawa Parliament and Government would be seeing in their dreams visions of Mulock's white elephant tramping up and down the highways of Canada, strewn financial ruin in his wake.

The log-heap season came to an end, as all things do, and the land clearer again was a railway passenger bound for his native country via Bay City, Saginaw, Vassar, Port Huron, London, Woodstock, Springford Home.

I pause here to say that the man who has never been on a pioneer job of clearing land ready for the plow, and has never seen a log heap of his own creation on fire, has missed a very enjoyable experience.

Many revolutions in public thought have been the result of a propaganda championed by a single individual. If Charles Dickens had not given to the world Bleak House, Chancery Court suits in England would still probably be "dragging out their dreary lengths for half a century or more, swallowing up estates in law costs, had its decaying houses and blighted lands in every shire, its lunatics in every mad house, its ruined suitors in every church yard."

In 1863 Harriet Beecher Stowe was a guest at the White House, Washington. As she was being given an introduction to Lincoln, his six feet four looked down upon her and said: "You are the little woman that caused this



terrible war." Dickens perhaps was not the first to advocate Chancery court reform. Wm. Lloyd Garrison and John Brown were ardent abolitionists, but it remained for Mrs. Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin to drop the bomb that gave freedom to the three million slaves that the Southern States held in servitude.

I am aware that some lone members of Parliament had suggested giving rural mail delivery a trial in Canada, but nothing came of it. The cost, as Postmaster-General Mulock and Lemieux contended, squelched the scheme, and anyhow the old way was considered good enough for the farmers of Canada, as letters herein makes plain.

**My first manuscript**, written December, 1905, and published in Woodstock, Hamilton, Tillsonburg, Ingersoll and many other newspapers. To Editor Sentinel-Review:

I have been living in Michigan the last three or four summers. Fifteen years ago there was no settlement at all where I was, to speak of, but the land being all right for farming purposes, it has been settling up rapidly, and now road constructions and other public improvements are going on in every direction. As in most new farming sections the people are not suffering on account of the fact, that there are no banks handy in which to deposit their surplus cash. The taxes all told on, say, a 160-acre farm of average improvements is about \$25 per year, but notwithstanding this state of affairs Uncle Sam's White Elephant, as Sir Wm. Mulock calls him, comes around every day except holidays and Sundays, to everybody's home with the mail bag, bringing to the people the welcome message from the outside world. Instead of hitching up a horse and rig and driving off three or four miles to a post office after the mail that has been lying there like as not for a week or more, and is all ancient history to the man in Michigan, as hundreds of farmers in this wealthy old County of Oxford, who pay three times the taxes on the same amount of land, have to do, there the whole post office outfit comes to your gate, as before stated.

In Great Britain they have rural delivery everywhere. Last year the income over the expenditure there was, in the postal department, \$28,000,000. In the United States the deficit was \$14,000,000. We must take into consideration in accounting for this the cost of installing rural delivery that is going on all the time in new and outlying districts. The system there is not as yet so far advanced as in the Old Country, where on account of the density of the population the cost is and will be for many years, below that of the United States, but notwithstanding this state of things rural delivery will, as the United States increases in population and the rural districts become

more thickly settled, finally become a self-supporting institution in that country. However, a Government that has seven or eight hundred million dollars coming into its treasury every year, as is the case with Uncle Sam, is not at all likely to go into hysterics over a paltry deficit of fifteen or twenty million dollars.

In order to get my mail daily for a year to my home here on the farm in South Norwich I must travel eight hundred miles, and I am not three or four miles from the post office either, but one and a quarter.

And while I and thousands of country people are tramping up and down the highways of this fair and prosperous land on post office business, our city fellow citizen, in all the large cities, has his mail delivered at his home or place of business, or both, three or four times a day, and the bill is paid by the Government with the money that for the most part comes out of the farmers' pockets. This, to me, does not seem to be a fair deal by any means. The Ottawa Government with a revenue of sixty million dollars a year or more ought surely to be able to make up any deficit that might occur in the postal department of the country.

Are the people and their descendants, who out of a dense forest, made this Eastern Canada what it is to-day to be forever deprived of the great and important service that immediately removes farm life from its isolated and lonely position into interesting, constant and quick intercourse with the wide world? Are our interests to be forever sacrificed to the end that railways, canals, and other kinds of public works be constructed and carried on in the newer parts and others of our country in order to facilitate the transportation of farm products to be placed on the market in competition with our own, produced by people who have come to our shores from all over creation, and who have no sort of claim upon us that places us under obligations to go into these gigantic and costly undertakings largely for their benefit and to our disadvantage?

Another result of this policy is its bringing into existence, not out of the farming class, be it remembered, a crop of millionaires, knights, lords and possibly a few native dukes may show up after a while. Duke of Oxford would not be a bad title for a fellow sorely in need of one, but that sort of thing will never do the farmer any good. Lords and dukes do not go riding around the country carrying his Majesty's mail to the people. They are more likely to be found in England and on the continent riding in state procession or on horseback at the heels of a pack of hounds mercilessly pursuing to the death a worthless panting fox that has as much right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" as they have. Although this title

business may not seem at first sight to have any reference to rural delivery the fact is that the result of bestowing them and other distinctions upon men who are already, in most all cases, overstocked with luxuries, and frequently with vanity, is to lower in the social scale and in other ways, and consequently their influence, the people who are in the rear and who are really the bone and sinew of the country, and thereby take out of their hands the weapon that would enable them to procure for themselves a fair share of those things that tend to make a happy and prosperous community. The city man should be as fast for this as anyone. When he sends off his paper, letter or parcel into the country he knows that it will not be hanging around a country post office for a week or more before reaching its destination; he can calculate to a few minutes as to when it will be in the hands of the person to whom he sends it. The farmer is too busy a man these farm-help famine times to run off two or three miles to a post office. He has too much of this "getting there" for that around home. If he should let up on "getting there" for just a few short months the treasury building at Ottawa and the towns and cities of this country would be desolate and forsaken as the ruins of Karnac or the derelict on the wide ocean. The telephone is, I fully realize, a thing to be reckoned with in considering the question of rural delivery, but, after all, it can never carry the newspaper, magazine, nor parcels, nor all the messages which will still go through the country in the form of letters, all of which is sure to increase in volume as time goes on. Let us make a determined demand for rural delivery, and this old obsolete mail system we now have in Canada will soon be a thing of the past.

GEORGE WILCOX,  
Springford, Ont.

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### The Sentinel-Review.

Mr. Wilcox's letter in this issue is well worth reading. It is not necessary to agree with everything he says—there is a reference to the Reform party, for instance, which it is difficult to understand in the light of what the present Government has done to afford the rural population relief from the burdens of tariff taxation—but the main thought and purpose of the letter is worthy of consideration apart from minor details.



### **Mail and Empire.**

Rural Mail Delivery Jan., 1906.

Mr. Geo. Wilcox who has a letter in the Woodstock Sentinel-Review, is a farmer in Oxford County. He resided three or four summers in Michigan where he experienced the advantages of Rural Mail Delivery. Since his return to Canada, he has learned how to appreciate the Rural Mail Service. He says to obtain his daily mail he must travel 800 miles every year. The loss of time and labor by farmers ought to be considered by the Government.

### **Ingersoll Tribune**

Jan., 1906.

The letter we publish in another column from Mr. Geo. Wilcox on rural mail delivery will no doubt be read with interest.

### **Woodstock Express.**

Rural Mail Delivery Jan., 1906.

Mr. Wilcox has evidently given much time and thought to this question, which would soon become a live one if many other farmers urged the importance of the matter.

### **London Free Press.**

Jan., 1906.

Mr. Geo. Wilcox, of Springford, makes out what the Woodstock Sentinel-Review acknowledges to be a very strong case in favor of Rural Mail Delivery. Commenting on the forcible letter of Mr. Wilcox, the Sentinel-Review, admits the strength of his arguments, but that no doubt in time the matter will be forced on the Government.

### **The Sun, Toronto.**

Jan., 1906.

Geo. Wilcox, of Oxford County, in a letter to the Woodstock Sentinel-Review, contrasts conditions in his present home in Oxford with those he found in Michigan. There he had his mail delivered daily by the rural mail carrier. He says our government, which has a yearly revenue of seventy million dollars, should install the same postal facilities in Canada.

### **Hamilton Times.**

Jan., 1906.

A man who says he has been living in Michigan lately and who has evidently fallen in love with the rural mail system writes to the Sentinel

Review advocating its adoption in Canada. Elsewhere we publish figures showing how Uncle Sam's costly experiment has turned out. We do not think Canadians wish to see a few more millions of taxation levied on them to make up for millions of postal deficit caused by a rural mail delivery white elephant.

### Hamilton Times.

Free Rural Delivery Jan., 1906.

Free rural postal delivery in the United States is meeting with much adverse criticism at the moment. General Rush C. Hawkins, in the "North American Review," writes that rural postal delivery was commenced in 1897, with four routes and an appropriation of forty thousand dollars. In January, 1904, there were 24,566 routes, and the total cost was \$12,921,700. The number of pieces of mail matter collected during the year was 133,083,351, and the value of the stamps upon the same was only \$2,601,815, which shows a loss of over ten million and a quarter dollars. It cost, indeed, nearly five times as much to pay for the rural delivery and ordinary mailing of the matter as was collected upon it. Gen. Hawkins does not hesitate to describe this as a monstrous scheme, which has a bad effect upon morality. He asserts that, of all the political machines ever set in motion for the advantage of self-seeking politicians, the rural free delivery shows promise of being the most far-reaching and potent in its malignant results. In the United States, in 1915, he counts upon there being at least a hundred thousand routes in operation, whose carriers and other employees, if so disposed, would be able to control five hundred thousand other votes besides their own, and he predicts that this newly-organized political spoilsman force, acting with others already in existence, would constitute a unit of power which would be irresistible. Such a criticism of the dangers of organization would clearly apply to the government having in its employ, as civil servants, the staff of any other public service, and would equally prevent government ownership of public utilities and services, telegraphs, telephones, postal service, savings banks, railways, and so forth. It is a fearful charge against a political system to show that, under it, public management of public utilities is impossible. It will prove very discouraging to those whose notions of government run away with them on Socialist lines. On the other hand, it is possible to conceive of conditions in which the civil service would not be a political machine. That condition has been fairly well reached in Great Britain and Ireland. Where Gen. Hawkins' criticism is strongest is where he shows the costliness of the experiment. As free rural delivery has had some support in Canada, the figures he quotes will prove a serious damper on those who had hoped

for a change that would have considerably ameliorated rural life. We could not hope to do the business cheaper, considering the sparseness of our population, and we certainly could not face the loss General Hawkins alleges.

The reception that my first manuscript got convinced me that if I stuck to the job long enough I would have my post reform plank loaded up from end to end with, at least, newspaper editors. I took good care, however, during the whole campaign, to hold in reserve room for Sir Wilfred and his Postmaster General Lemieux, who declared in Parliament that if he accepted my invitation to get on, the costs would ruin the country.

Editor, Sentinel-Review:

The Hamilton Times referring to my article on rural mail delivery published in the Woodstock and other papers last week, quotes a statement made by General Hawkins in the North American Review that if the present rate of increase in the cost of installing the system in the United States continues, the deficit in the post department there will in 1915 be forty million dollars. In commenting on this, the Times man remarks that "the expenses of Uncle Sam should lead us to wait and let the experimenting be done by others." It seems to me that the Times man has come to this decision on the strength of very poor evidence. If the present rate of increase of the population of the U. S. A., continues, in 1915 there will be twenty million families there who at the present rate of increase in the revenue from customs and other sources, will in 1915 have coming into the treasury at Washington one thousand million dollars every year. If the U. S. A. Government should become so indifferent to the welfare of its people and so destitute of all ideas of justice as to refuse to hand over the insignificant sum of two dollars a year to every home in the land for the purpose of paying the rural delivery bill, they had better wring the old screaming eagle's neck and trample in the dust the declaration that the inalienable right of mankind to "life, liberty and the pursuits of happiness" is a doctrine that they take a lot of stock in. Gen. Hawkins is evidently a Democrat and "agin the Government."

GEORGE WILCOX,  
Springford, Ont.

**Hamilton Spectator.**

Rural Mail Delivery, Feb., 1906.

They tell us that one hundred and forty billion of our fellows have lived and died. Out of this vast multitude, apart from those connected with the religions of the world, the names of the men who still live in the memory of the people as benefactors of the race may be written on a postcard. Ask



a schoolboy who could not for the life of him tell you the name of our Governor-General what four names should have first place in this list. He would answer, "Benjamin Franklin, Hoe, Morse, Stevenson," men who placed in the hands of the civilized world discoveries that laughed at time and distance; discoveries that, if given a job that you want done in a hurry will not go off for three or four days just when the work is almost finished, down to the post-office corners. They are fast and reliable, they get there, they have qualities that everybody is after, especially when it comes to sending news and getting news.

The newspaper business, which has with rapid strides attained to a position almost beyond belief, depends largely upon those agencies.

In a small farm journal on the table here as I write, the editor says: "For the December number forty-six tons of blank paper was required. He invites his friends to come and see him, and his news factory. I will accept the invitation and report. He also published a general newspaper. I am in a hurry, though—and so is the editor—and can't look around much.

The clock will soon strike the hour for going to press, the editor and his staff are hurriedly putting in shape for the type-setters the last instalment of news that is being flashed across the wire. Among the despatches is one saying that pork is going up in England and that live hogs have taken a sudden jump from \$6.00 per hundred pounds in Toronto to \$6.75. The casts are placed on the cylinder, the pressman moves the lever, the sleeping giant springs into activity and the newspaper folded and addressed, at the rate of 200 per minute, is ready to start out upon its important mission of satisfying that almost universal desire for the latest news and current literature. The wagons at the delivery door are quickly loaded and hustled on through the hurrying multitude of street cars, horses and vehicles and humanity to the mail train that in ten minutes will be rushing on, like the roaring, screaming tempest, at the rate of fifty miles an hour upon a track that has cut the farmers' farms and fields into triangles. Within a hundred minutes from the time when the blank white paper was grasped by the roller in the press room the newspaper complete is landed in a country post office seventy-five miles from its starting place. The postmaster has got his money out of it. The railway company have got their money out of it and are done with it, and the men who make it have, I hope, got their money out of it. The government that took it in hand and rushed it on with such neatness and despatch will have nothing more to do with it, and have left it, after all this outlay of money, brains, care, hurry and bustle, dejected and undone, dumped into a pigeon-hole in the country post office, and there it will rest for four or

five days, like as not; and by the time the farmer gets it, who in the meantime has lost \$15 on a hog sale on account of not having the latest market reports in hand, a thousand copies of it in the city of Toronto would not sell for a copper, except for waste paper, and if a newsboy there should attempt to sell it on the streets he would be walked off to a lockup or lunatic asylum in short order. The label (a cow-bell would be a suitable substitute, however), on this paper bears the name of a very intelligent and well-to-do farmer who lives over on one of the back concessions, and who in one way and another pays a hundred and fifty dollars every year into the coffers of his country.

Saturday night comes, and the prospects of a comparatively easy day in sight, he starts out on a fruitless hunt, like as not, among his neighbors for his mail, which is still resting peacefully in its quarters, and is in for spending the Sabbath there. As it lies cooped up with its fellows, it preaches a sermon that the country people in Canada have evidently taken very little note of as yet. Sleeping in meeting is a bad trait, but, anyhow, the preaching goes on Sunday after Sunday at the post office. As for me, I have managed to keep awake long enough to hear a few things that seem to be of considerable import.

The treasury at Ottawa has accumulated a surplus in the last twelve months of twelve million dollars over and above the expenditure. Our legislators and government, in whose behalf we farmers and country people have freely expended oceans of human energy and horseflesh, (A cheeky fellow looking over my shoulder suggests "put money after horseflesh;" but I shall leave that for the city chap to "put" into his list of contributions) will be assembled in parliament shortly discussing with a good deal of feeling a hundred different schemes as to how this surplus should be disposed of, and in all this figuring and display of wisdom there will be not a shadow of a reference to the fact that something should be done immediately to get this mail package out of the hole it is in in the post office. Taking General Hawkins' statement, which I referred to in a former article, that is being quoted by some of the big city papers in this country for the purpose of getting the old white elephant into better condition for show purposes, this twelve million dollars would send the rural free delivery man to every farmer's home in Eastern Canada without another dollar's outlay on the part of the government or anyone for five years straight. If we farmers and country people in old Canada, who number almost two-thirds of its population, stand around with our hands in our pockets and fail to take advantage of the financial conditions that exist at Ottawa at this time, and not insist upon the

instituting of rural delivery, we deserve to go down from our position of prosperity, intelligence and freedom, as did ancient Greece, to poverty, ignorance and bondage.

GEORGE WILCOX,  
Springford, Ont.

House of Commons, Ottawa, Dec. 10th, 1906

My Dear Mr. Wilcox:

Your favor with newspaper article re Rural Delivery came duly to hand. I have read part of them and am holding them to go over them more fully. I am also desirous of getting what information I can on the subject, so if the way opens up to place my views on record before the house, I may be prepared to do so.

In discussing the subject with private members, I find they are of the opinion that the expense would be too heavy for the Government to undertake at present. However, agitation and education work may be carried on in the meantime.

Yours truly,  
MALCOLM S. SCHELL.

**Free Press London.**

Rural Mail Delivery. Jan. 24, 1907.

Postmaster General Cortelyou in an interview with Frank G. Carpenter the other day at Washington said the rural mail service is pretty well established throughout the United States. The deficit in his department in round numbers for the last fiscal year was ten million dollars. This is four million less than the deficit in 1905. If this ten million dollars deficit in the United States is anything for us to go by the deficit at Ottawa would have had to have made up last year if rural delivery was an established institution in this country would have been seven hundred thousand dollars only, or sixty-five cents a family for the Dominion.

In order to get their mail in and out of the post office every lawful day, a service which, should the big city man be deprived of, he would be for consigning the whole post outfit to the infernal regions, the farmers of Oxford county would have to travel at least one hundred and eighty thousand miles every week, averaging four miles a trip and nine million miles every year. This at five cents a mile would come to four hundred and fifty thousand dollars. At this rate the country people of Canada would have to travel ten hundred million miles every year at a cost of fifty million dollars. I am using round numbers, in getting their mail in and out of the post office. Five cents a mile is too low a figure to put this at. No farmer in this country can



afford to leave his work and hitch up and unhitch his horse and rig six times, board himself and travel in all twenty-four miles a week, for one dollar and twenty cents. This lavishing money on departments of government where the great majority of the country people will never see hide nor hair of it, and then when it comes to the post office service, that touches the everyday affairs of everybody so closely and that at a small additional cost comparatively could send the mail man up and down our concessions daily taking in and handing out his messages and his salary to a grateful community. Uncle Sam's dead and buried rural delivery white elephant is resurrected and brought over here to scare the natives out of going into extravagant postal expenditure.

Over eighty million dollars came into the treasury at Ottawa the last fiscal year, sixty-four dollars per family in Canada. There are now about fifty thousand people in the county of Oxford. Figure it out and you will find that as partners in this revenue raising business, Oxford's share would be at least seven hundred thousand dollars. Although this great company with headquarters at Ottawa was organized for the declared purpose of facilitating the pursuit of happiness among all its people, the officers of the concern, have, I am sorry to say, almost wholly ignored this condition of the partnership, for although the business done by the firm has resulted in bringing into its coffers year after year millions upon millions of clear profit which are all paid out to the people of Canada, Oxford and scores of other counties in Ontario and the eastern provinces have never in all these years received but a few paltry remittances.

Luman Skinkle came home from town with his pockets full of money, the proceeds of a sale of butter that his wife had made, from milking the cows to churning, for Everybody worked but Father at Luman's house. Josiah Allen's wife was visiting there at the time, and while listening to one of Luman's outbursts of eloquence on the doctrine of perfection and the necessity of supporting foreign missions, Mrs. Skinkle came into the room from the kitchen and asked Luman for six cents to buy a box of hair pins from a peddler who had come to the house, "and finally with a great effort and a shadder on his brow he took out four cents and gave her" and she went off with it without a word of protest.

The farmers and country people all over east Canada have to put up with this sort of treatment from Ottawa largely because of the difficulty in concentrating the power which they hold in their keeping and using it as an instrument in placing their views on public questions in the hands of the government, but as this seems impossible for the farmers to accomplish in Canada, a reasonable thing for a Government to do, one would think, would

be to keep its ears open so if as the "Plowman homewards plods his weary way" he would sing out his grievances and suggestions they could hear what he had to say and look into his case. There was no great agitation in the U. S. for R. D. until in 1892, Mortimer Whitehead of N. J., a Granger, almost single handed went before a committee of Congress and succeeded in getting an appropriation of sixty thousand dollars to start a few trial routes. Congress discovered that he was saying something worth listening to. Although Mrs. Allen was a friend of Luman, she called him a robber and an inconsistent and ungrateful, wicked man, and that before "tackling the universe he had better spend some of his energy and money on home missions." She says of him that he had got into the habit of not noticing anything his wife said, because his mind was taken up with weightier subjects, and for the same reason I fear that our representatives at Ottawa will take but very little notice of what I and others am saying on the subject of rural delivery. However, I will not use any of these harsh terms in reference to our government. There are enough people all over the country doing that every day to satisfy my appetite in that direction, if I had any. Having lived in the States and enjoyed the daily visitations of the Rural Mail Carriers I am convinced that there is no "weightier subject" in this country except the liquor traffic, upon which the attention of its people and its government could be concentrated.

The editor of one of the big Toronto papers wrote me recently that the sparsely settled parts of Canada would look with envy, he feared, upon Ontario and the older provinces enjoying their daily visitations of the mail carriers. This remark has reference to West Canada mostly. In the U. S. no mail route is established, nor continued where the business done is below a certain amount stated in Post Department laws. This same principle is acknowledged and adopted here; the cities on account of the density of population and post business done have for years had their mail delivered and collected two or three times a day, and the Dominion Government has footed the bill. No loyal citizen or community should be so unreasonable as to want the impossible done. West Canada is now abundantly able to run its own show. They have for years been putting their hands in our pockets and appropriating the result of our industry, economy and ability to raise money. As a member of this Canada firm, I myself owned several hundred acres of that country a few years ago, but as if to add insult to injury, railroad companies, land corporations, and foreigners and all sorts and conditions of men

have jumped my claim and now all the business relations, I or any of my posterity, if farmers will ever have with that part of the country, will be to hand over to them the same old contribution year after year to construct for themselves railroads, canals and all sorts of public works and to boom emigration and everything they can lay their hands on that this get-rich-quick idea, with all the real or imaginary blessings, may be realized. There is no sense, however, in laying all the blame at the door of Parliament. The people are the court of last resort in this country, notwithstanding the House of Lords in England, and this court for the most part are the people who live on the farms in east Canada, and all that is necessary for us to do in order to have our case attended to, is to insist that a reasonable portion of this vast accumulation at Ottawa shall be expended in home mission work. As I complete this manuscript and read it over, and what I wrote last winter on the same topic, and seeing the wreck I have made of all my past professions of friendship for and loyalty to the Reform party and Government, I can hardly believe my own eyes, but I am still a friend, swinging the red light, hoping the engineer and trainmen will heed the signal, apply the brakes and stop the west bound, rushing train, laden with the profits of this great partnership concern, hand over the Postmaster General at Ottawa at least enough of the plunder on board to send the Rural Delivery man on his daily rounds up and down the highways of this fair and prosperous land, and that never again shall the sorry spectacle be seen of farmers in these old settled wealthy counties being compelled to make a journey of eight and nine miles in order to get their mail either in or out of a post office, a sight I can see most any day.

Those of your readers who noticed my articles on Rural Delivery in Canada last winter, would like to know, possibly, what sort of reception the subject received at the hands of the public and if any progress is being made. I am pleased to say that the people everywhere in this part of Oxford county, with whom I happened to meet while my letters were appearing in the papers, were to a man, some women also, quite enthusiastic in their approval of everything I had written on the question. I did not take all the papers last winter, of course, that are published in Canada, only two or three, but I ran across at least fourteen including the leading London, Hamilton and Toronto dailies, that had either the whole of my articles in or parts of them, and made favorable comments in their editorial columns, except one Hamilton editor who thought the resulting costs and political corruption would offset all the advantages. I have sent these papers together with



township councils and society reports to Ottawa, and am cheeky enough to hope that the Government will not relegate the package to the waste basket.

The surplus in the post office department at Ottawa the last fiscal year was five hundred thousand dollars. Why not give rural delivery a trial with at least part of this money?

GEORGE WILCOX,  
Springford, Ont., Oxford County.

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### **The Sentinel-Review.**

#### **Rural Mail Delivery.**

In a communication printed elsewhere in this issue, Mr. George Wilcox, of Springford, takes up again the question of free rural delivery. Mr. Wilcox's previous letters on this question, published in the Sentinel-Review some time ago, attracted a good deal of attention, and although they did not result in the establishment of any mail routes, they set many people thinking, and when people begin to think seriously with reference to any desirable reform the reform itself may not be very far off.

Free rural mail delivery is one of the established institutions of many of the more thickly-settled districts of the United States, and it is constantly spreading. It has, no doubt, been a costly experiment; but there would be no need for Canadians imitating the extravagance of American methods. Costly as it has been in the United States, however, there seems to be no thought of abandoning it; it is felt that the service rendered in return for the expenditure is too important.

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### **The Woodstock Daily Express**

Woodstock, Jan., 1907.

#### **Rural Mail Delivery**

A few days ago there was published in The Express a letter from George Wilcox, of Springford, in which he discussed the question of rural mail delivery. This is not the first occasion that Mr. Wilcox has discussed this matter, for his communications have appeared in the columns of this paper many times before, and, in fact, have appeared in the leading papers of Western Ontario and Eastern Canada. Just what fruit Mr. Wilcox's effort is bearing is not now apparent, but there is no mistaking the fact that he is most enthusiastic himself and will wage the campaign until it does result in some action.



high-class United States publication. I have Ayer's Newspaper Annual on the table before me and find the circulation of the Argonaut to be 14,000, Hearst's Examiner, same city, is 280,000, and of the eighteen big newspapers there the Argonaut foots the list in point of circulation. It is "Independent" in politics. I once heard Joseph Rymal say that he was seated beside John A. McDonald in the House of Commons one day when a member who had been elected on the independent ticket was being sworn in. Rymal said to John A., "What is your opinion of an independent?" "A man you can't depend on," was the reply.

The surplus of receipts over the expenditure in the Post Office Department at Ottawa is now, it seems, one million, five hundred thousand dollars. There are thirty-six thousand rural mail carriers in the U. S. At this rate Canada would require two thousand five hundred carriers to do the work here. This at seven hundred dollars each would come to one million eight hundred thousand dollars. We must not forget that wherever the system is in operation nearly all the small post offices that are now scattered over the more thickly-settled parts of the country and also the mail carriers who now travel to and from railroad points with outside country office mails, would be put out of business with its attendant costs. When considering Rural Delivery this is an important item. Hon. Mr. Lemieux stated in Parliament the other day that it was his intention to establish a lot of new post offices in Eastern Canada, and also in Western Canada. Now, as for Eastern Canada, Rural Delivery would do all the work that these new offices will do, and their consequent cost would go a long way in paying the R. D. bill.

The revenue collected at Ottawa the last fiscal year was sixty-four dollars per family of Canada. In the United States it was seventeen dollars below this per family, and yet their Government pay out to the people \$135,000,000 in pensions, and to the army and navy \$200,000,000, and besides is sending the Rural Delivery man on his daily rounds in all thickly-settled parts of the country. Canada has none of these expenditures, and yet, when the people who live upon the farms, the people who made possible the gathering in of this vast revenue of 80 millions dollars at Ottawa—and upon whose industry, intelligence and contentedness depends the value of every factory, every mercantile establishment, every industry of every sort, every transportation outfit, all professions and callings, and of the homes and buildings of every sort in every city, town and hamlet in Canada, ask, for the purpose of making up the anticipated deficit in the Post Department at Ottawa, for the paltry sum of sixty-five cents per family for the support of Rural Delivery, the cost swamps the project with neatness and despatch.



If good old "Joe" Rymal was alive and wanted to know My opinion of this San Francisco "independent," I would say to him, that I am greatly surprised that the Hon. Mr. Lemieux, a man who I fully believe is respected greatly by both sides of the House at Ottawa, and by all who know him, should have taken any stock whatever in such unwarrantable statements, which says among other things: "The Canada Post Office, on the other hand, is not only keeping up its Rural Free Delivery but is extending it." This specimen that I have quoted shows what a Post Office cyclopedia this San Francisco chap is. I had an idea myself that I was well posted in the postal affairs of Canada, and here, after all, this outlay on my part of mental effort, postage stamps, and shoe leather in an endeavor to induce the Ottawa people to give Rural Free Delivery a trial in Canada, it turns out that I have all this time been "wasting my fragrance on the desert air." It is a mystery to me, however, that the newspaper editors who are supposed to know what is going on everywhere, and who have published rods of columns of my manuscripts, and also editorials on them urging the Government to start a few trial routes, would be so unobservant not to have noticed that Rural Delivery is in full swing in this post-office paradise. The only explanation I can conceive of why this California man should publish such trash is, that in the stampede for safe quarters when the earthquake and fire were making ruins of this city, he took refuge in Lick's Observatory, and hitting upon the happy thought of taking a look through the powerful telescope, there in search of "some fair spot where man may find repose", discovered a lone mail-carrier in a sled behind a dog team delivering the mails to the dwellers along the southern shores of the Arctic Ocean.

Rural Mail Delivery,

March, 1907.

To the Editor Sentinel-Review:

Sir.—Although two-thirds of the electors of South Oxford are farmers and country people, I believe that I am safe in saying that two-thirds of the delegates who attended its Liberal Conventions are from the towns and villages and other post-office points, and country people who do not live more than one-half mile from a post office. I have never yet seen a bill calling a meeting to appoint delegates to attend a convention, posted up out in the country, but always in the vicinity of a post office only and place of holding meetings; consequently half the farmers do not see them at all, and of those who do, distance and bad weather often prevent their attendance, conditions that do not count with villagers and towns people. The result is the latter have the matter in their own hands and appoint the delegates

accordingly. It seems to me that conventions should take these facts into consideration and avoid antagonizing this handicapped political giant not represented, and in whose hands rests the destiny of the whole political fabric.

As everybody knows, political conventions are not for the purpose of selecting candidates for parliament only, but rightly enough to give expression to the people's opinion on the public questions that come within the jurisdiction of our law-makers. For delegates professing to have the welfare of their party and country at heart to exhibit at such times selfishness and ingratitude in efforts to defeat this important function, is a very unwise proceeding certainly.

To discover that rural mail delivery for the thickly-settled parts of Canada is a question that the Sentinel-Review, The Globe, The Mail and Empire, The Montreal Herald and Star and scores of other newspapers all over the country and a great political party, also have declared has come to stay, does not require a Ross telescope, and to ascertain by resolution the feeling of this rural constituency on the subject at the Tillsonburg Reform Convention, should have, by all means, received the hearty support of every delegate. But this was an affair that concerned the farmers mostly, and a resolution to this end, as you know, was moved by Mr. W. H. Kipp, of Dereham, President of a very important organization, and engaged in various ways for the welfare of his fellows. He necessarily must be in close touch with his mail box. But to get his mail business accomplished as it should be he is compelled to put up a tramp of 800 miles every year to and from his post office. Mr. Lamb, the seconder of the resolution, is a lover of his daily newspaper and has got the money to pay for it, but to get it into his home every newspaper day he must travel to the tune of nearly 2,000 miles every year. And this sort of business is duplicated in thousands of cases in the South Riding of Oxford every year. Yet all these people have votes and memories, facts that should have been taken into account by people who get up on platforms and preach harmony and good feeling, and the beauties of Democratic institutions, and not be treated as a joke and consigned to the realm of executive committee oblivion, as I consider the Kipp-Lamb resolution. And the newspapers, The Woodstock Sentinel-Review Co., for instance, which is keeping up local mail routes at its own expense, how can we expect their old-time enthusiasm in the interests of a candidate or party or a government which approves of such manoeuvres by men who evidently were perfect strangers to fair play.

Mr. Schell in caucus at Ottawa, when ever opportunity admits, urges upon the Government the wisdom and necessity of starting trial R. M. D. routes in the thickly-settled parts of Canada. The Hon. Geo. P. Graham wrote me the other day, "Canada has become accustomed to handling large questions, and she will ultimately have to deal with Rural Mail Delivery."

The farmers and country people who were at that convention should have had a chance, and all other friends of R. M. D. too by resolution indicated their appreciation of the stand those gentlemen have taken in the interest of this great service.

GEORGE WILCOX,  
Springford, Ontario.

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House of Commons, Ottawa,  
Hansard, Feb. 15, 1907.

Joseph E. Armstrong, M.P., for East Lambton,

"I would like to know what the Postmaster-General is doing in regard to rural mail delivery. I have made a good deal of investigation of that subject in the U. S. in the past year, and I can assure him that it is going to be, in the near future, a burning question in this country."

Mr. Lemieux:

"I think that most parts of Canada are not ready to pay for such luxury. For the present it must not be thought of except as an ideal. With the experience of the U. S. before us we cannot think of giving this country rural mail delivery. I will answer my honorable friend by a quotation from a very high-class paper, the San Francisco Argonaut:

See newspaper article of date March 14, 1907.

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Geo. Wilcox Esq., *Springford, Ont.*      Ottawa, Feb. 22-1907  
Springford, Ont.      Office of  
Minister of Agriculture

"We are establishing post offices all over the country; this gives the public a service which is almost as good, if not equal, to any Rural Delivery that can be established in Canada at the present time."

Yours very truly,

Geo. Wilcox, Esq., *Springford, Ont.*      SYDNEY FISHER.





very government, in whose behalf I had expended at times, more mental and physical energy and horse flesh than did Dickens' Mr. Bucket, in his pursuit of Lady Deadlock. And then how could I expect my stage horse cheekyness to be tolerated by the Liberal press of the country, when I asked them to publish my manuscripts? But to their everlasting honor, at least in my estimation, and I hope in that of the country people generally, many Reform papers, including your own excellent publication, gave this a place in their columns. And if a mild criticism was put up by one or two that have come under my notice, I consider myself very fortunate indeed, and should be content perhaps to let your remarks on the Argonaut affair rest.

But you are a friend of R. D., you tell us. So you are in the "fight in a mild sort of way," on the same side that I am, but handicapped (not intellectually) as I can readily understand, by conditions that I am almost wholly free from. And although I am doing my best to get the Simcoe Reformer out of the hole it is stuck in, and has been repeatedly, for a week at a time for years in the country post office, and into the hands of the rural homes of Norfolk county, while it is yet "a thing of beauty and a joy forever" and not an insult to the intelligence and occupation of the farming community, I can't expect you to endorse every thing I say on the R. D. question.

Postmaster General Lemieux read for the information of the House of Commons, when the subject was up for discussion February 15th, quite a long extract from the San Francisco Argonaut. In addition to what I quoted in my article, you published March 15th, the Argonaut man says: "It may be thought that the Canadian service is not as good as ours; it is much better; it could hardly, by the way, be as bad. Our post officials are still talking with terror of the enormous deficit threatened by the rural free delivery, while at the same time their absurd bureaucratic administration and their red-tape and sealing wax transportation plans are strangling that admirable system. They have forbidden the rural carriers to deliver express parcels to the rural population. Then comes this proverbial Yankee ignorance of Canada's affairs. The Canada Post Office, on the other hand, is not only keeping up its **Rural Free Delivery but is extending it.**" I can't see how on earth Mr. Lemieux can get anything from this Argonaut evidence, although it may be a very "High-class Newspaper," in some ways, that can help him out on his opposition to R. M. D.

The Argonaut's complaint, as you must surely see, was not that R. M. is a failure in the United States, for does he not say, "that admirable system," but it was against the Washington management of the mail service, including the refusal to allow the rural carriers to deliver express packages for the

country people. Of course, by these quotations, Mr. Lemieux was giving the members who were responsible for upsetting his express package scheme, a dose of Yankee advice that it is to be hoped may turn out to have been a profitable proceeding. But why should he ignore the fact that the deficit in the U. S. post department went down from 14,000,000 in 1905 to 10,000,000 in 1906. The deficit is not the result of R. M. D., but is due to the fact that the revenue from certain classes of mail matter "is not equal to the cost of maintaining their part of the service," is what the Postmaster General of the U. S. said recently to Frank G. Carpenter, the great newspaper correspondent.

In conclusion, Mr. Editor, let me say that, as a result of this letter you will see, I hope, why this fellow whose manuscripts on R. M. D. have taken up considerable of your valuable space, and for which I sincerely thank you, had just cause to take exception to the evidence Mr. Lemieux brought forward for the purpose of squelching Rural Mail Delivery, of which Mr. Armstrong recently in parliament said, "is going to be in the near future a burning question in Canada."

GEO. WILCOX.

Springford, March 25th, 1907.

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### Woodstock Sentinel-Review

Sept. 2nd, 1907.

Borden's meeting in Woodstock:

For the most part Mr. Borden devoted his time to an exposition of his platform repeating his assertion that he had not found one Conservative in Ontario to dissent from it. The greatest stress, naturally, was laid on rural mail delivery, which obviously would appeal to his audience.

Of rural mail delivery he said: "A proposal which should come home to everybody in Canada was rural free delivery. Great Britain had had it for many years and the United States inaugurated it about ten years ago. It would be a great economic saving for one man to deliver mail to the houses of two hundred people instead of the two hundred people having to hitch up and drive to a post office. It should be carried out for the sake of making the country as attractive as possible to the people who lived in it, and nothing I know of would do more in this direction than the daily delivery of mail."



## **The Hamilton Spectator.**

Rural Mail Delivery

Sept. 15th, 1907

George Wilcox says some things about Mr. Borden.

Springford, Ont., Sept. 23:

George Wilcox, the Rural Free Delivery man, whose letters on that subject in the Spectator will be remembered, is quite tickled because Mr. Borden has made Free Rural Delivery one of his planks in the Conservative platform. Being interviewed by a Woodstock-Sentinel reporter, Mr. Wilcox said:

"Last Saturday, upon looking over my week's accumulation of daily papers and other mail matters, to my utter astonishment I found that Mr. Borden had actually stolen my Free Rural Mail Delivery plank (that I had, as I thought, in safe keeping until called for by the Reform party), and had had it off down to Halifax and in various towns and cities in Canada, showing up its nice qualities and had actually the audacity to bring it here to Woodstock, my home county town, to let the people here also see what a dandy plank he had in his platform. Mr. Borden was very careful, I notice however, not to state how he came by this valuable piece of property, nor how I came by it. I got it two years ago in Michigan. I might say in passing that I, last year, offered the plank (not naming the consideration), to Mr. Borden. He gave me to understand that he could get along for a while yet without it. I have for two years, as you know, (the S. R.) been urging the Government at Ottawa to take it on trial, and although the press of Canada backed me up almost unanimously in favor of doing so, hardly anybody at Ottawa, except Mr. Schell and Mr. Armstrong, up to a few days ago, seemed to think it was a valuable piece of timber. Mr. Schell, you know, deals extensively in timber. I believe, though, that ever since Mr. Borden found out that I had a lumber yard over in South Norwich, he has had his eyes on this plank waiting for a chance to carry out his scheme of plunder. Of course, the Government knew well that Mr. Borden is a shrewd statesman, and that he knows a good thing when he sees it, and when he does steal anything it is something worth stealing.

"I have been expecting all along, notwithstanding the Government's seeming indifference, that they would suddenly decide to ask me to send it on to Ottawa to be cut up and made into rural delivery wagons; and to have it carried off in this fashion is certainly a provoking business, but now since this stealing affair, I expect the Government will see what a foolish piece of business it was to not have taken up with my offer when I was in a position to deliver the goods; but however, I intend to get right after the thief and

repossess my property, if possible. I expect upon my arrival in West Canada to find that the Ottawa authorities have instructed the mounted police force of that country to give me all possible assistance in the way of running down the rascal and, if possible, recover the stolen treasure, and send by special train to Ottawa for the purpose above stated.

"However, if Mr. Borden finally succeeds in holding onto this plank of mine, in spite of me, I wish him all sort of good luck with it. It may finally turn out to have been one of the most fortunate affairs that has ever occurred in Canada. And I also hope the memory of his being long-fingered will fade away, overshadowed by the bright rays of sunshine that rural delivery will shed upon fair Canada, and that generations yet unborn will build monuments to his memory for having the foresight and courage to take an old plank that had been lying around for two or three years in my sawmill yard and induce a great political party to give it the most important place in its platform upon which to fight to the death the great battle for control at Ottawa."

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**From Editor of Toronto Star**

Geo. Wilcox, Esq.  
Dear Sir:

Sept. 16th, 1907.

"I congratulate you upon your persistence and upon the theft of Rural Mail Delivery, which I see you charge against Mr. R. L. Borden."

J. E. ATKINSON.

When the Rural Mail Delivery Campaign was about two years old I had in a scrap-book the newspaper articles I had written, editorial comments on them, letters from members of Parliament and other people too numerous to mention, and much other data on the subject. At Sir Wilfrid's request, I sent the book to him and also afterwards to Postmaster-General Lemieux, as the following letters show. My business was to convince the Ottawa Government that the logheap man from Michigan had got a breeze going that would land it into the cold shades of opposition if it persisted in ignoring the existence of the post-reform plank I had in my lumber yard in Oxford County.

Springford, Nov. 4th, 1907.

Hon. R. L. Borden.

Dear Sir:

Many Canadian newspapers and people who have written me, and others with whom I have come in contact, seem to take me for rural mail headquarters. However, be that as it may, upon the strength of it and also as I wrote you last session that the country people of Canada would appreciate your efforts if you would urge upon the Government the wisdom and justice of giving the R. M. D. a trial in Canada.

On behalf of the friends of the great service, I extend to you my most hearty thanks for giving it a place in the platform upon which you will fight the coming battle for control at Ottawa.

Yours sincerely,

GEORGE WILCOX.

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**Reply**

Ottawa, Nov. 6th, 1907.

Dear Sir:

Thanks for your letter of the 4th inst., which I very much appreciate.

Believe me,

Yours sincerely,

R. L. BORDEN.

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The reader will note that in the letter published in the Sentinel-Review on March, 1907, I put up a kick about the South Oxford Reform Convention sidetracking the Kipp-Lamb Rural Mail resolution, asking the Government to start some trial routes, that the idea was promptly sat on, and treated as some joke. This was a hard blow but not a knockout.

An old friend of mine, John Rock, of Rock's Mills, South Norwich, was then President of the Reform Executive Committee. In a day or two after my resolution (I wrote it) was kicked out of the convention and relegated to the mercies of the said executive committee, I went to Mr. Rock with my R. M. D. scrap-book, hoping to convince him by the evidence therein and what I had to say, that his committee would make no mistake if they made out of that convention joke, a reality that the Ottawa Government would take note of. The Committee at their next meeting passed the resolution. I immediately forwarded it on to M. S. Schell, M.P., for South Oxford, then in Ottawa.



Moved by Dr. Rodgers, seconded by Mr. Brink, that in pursuance of the resolution presented by Messrs. Kipp and Lamb at the last annual meeting of this Association, held at Tillsonburg, and by that meeting referred to this Executive Committee for action: We, as your Executive Committee, recommend that the Convention urge upon the Government the advisability of taking into their serious consideration, Free Mail Delivery in the more thickly-populated districts of Canada, and that it is the opinion of this Convention that the Government should, at the earliest possible moment, confer on the citizens of this country the many advantages to be derived from such improved postal services.

### Reply

House of Commons, Ottawa, April 30th, 1908.

Dear Mr. Wilcox:

Your letter to hand this morning. I was very much pleased when I learned of the resolution passed by the Executive of the South Oxford Reform Association. While the Government seem to be quite sympathetic it can hardly be expected that anything will be done more than investigate before the elections come off. J. E. Armstrong is about the only Conservative who says anything about it in Parliament.

Yours very truly, M. S. SCHELL

Minister of Railways Office,

Geo. Wilcox, Esq.

Ottawa, Ontario,

Springford, Ont.

Jan. 9th, 1908.

"Canada has become accustomed to deal with large questions, and she will ultimately have to deal with Rural Mail Delivery."

Geo. P. GRAHAM.

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Postmaster-General's Office,

Dear Sir:

February 22nd, 1908.

I have your letter of February 19th, re establishment of Rural Mail Delivery. In answer I beg to state that the information furnished will receive my best consideration.

Yours truly,

Geo. Wilcox, Esq.,

RODOLPHE LEMIEUX.

Springford, Ontario.

To get my newspaper articles read by as many people as possible, I sent, at the times I wrote them, as many as 40 or 50 manuscript copies to as many newspapers for publication.

### Open Letter.

May, 1908.

To the Hon. Rodolphe Lemieux,  
Postmaster-General.

Dear Sir:

The Hon. Geo. P. Graham in a speech in Centre York, during the recent by-election campaign, is reported to have said, "Other parts of the country, where the population warrants, should have Rural Mail Delivery as well as Centre York." The York County Council about that time also had been asked, so Toronto papers reported, to supply maps and other information to the post-office authorities in view of starting R. M. D. in that county. After this indication of the Government's intention to make a move in the matter it is not at all surprising that the friends of the idea were greatly disappointed at your attitude in the discussion on the subject in Parliament, April 27. I have the Hansard here of that date, and to me the arguments you put up seem not to have been well considered. You say, "The United States adopted R. M. D." When? When they had six million people? Not at all. They did not adopt R. M. D. with 15 millions nor 20 million people, nor with 60 million people. They never dreamed of it in those days, not even when the population reached 70 million, but only when their post revenue had increased from a few million, to 178 million, and when the population reached the high-water mark of 80 millions." If you had made a close study of this question you would have known that the U. S. Government begun the supervision of R. M. D. in 1897. It had been going on trial for four years before that, and this in face of the fact that in 1896 their post office revenue was but 82 million dollars, and a deficit of eight and one-half millions, and not, as you say, when the revenue was 178 million dollars. This fact that the post revenue of the U. S. has increased during ten years R. M. D. has been in operation, from 82 millions, with a deficit of eight and one-half millions, to 178 million dollars, with a deficit of about 6 millions, should forever settle this much-discussed question of cost.

In the year 1806 the United States had six million population. Their post-office revenue was then 436 thousand dollars. Their revenue from all sources was fifteen million dollars. Canada's six million people had last year a post revenue of 9 million dollars, and a surplus of at least one million and

a half dollars, a revenue from all sources of ninety-six million dollars. In 1835 the U. S. had 15 million people. Her post revenue was  $3\frac{1}{2}$  million dollars, revenue from all sources 17 millions. In 1846 the U. S. had 20 million people, a post-office revenue of 4 million dollars; revenue from all sources, 27 million. In 1890 they had a population of about 60 million, but R. D. was dreamed of then, sixteen years previous to their post revenue being 178 million dollars. A U. S. farm journal before me dated 1891, says: "Post-master-General John Wanamaker writes us that he proposes to give R. M. D. a trial immediately." When the U. S. had a population of 70 million R. M. D. had for years passed the dream stage and was relieving thousands of country people of this intolerable tramp to the post office.

"The U. S. has a population 14 times ours with a post revenue of twenty times as great (you say). This was not the relative position of the population and revenue by any means in 1897. Although last year the U. S. spent, as you say, "26 million dollars on R. M. D." If the cost there is anything for us to go by, and you seem to think it is, our bill for the service would have been last year, other conditions being relatively the same, under two million dollars, and the post deficit, the insignificant sum of half a million dollars. In your eagerness to show up our comparative poverty and thereby delay R. D. you seem to lose sight of this fact, that our revenue of 96 million dollars, collected yearly at Ottawa from all sources, is fifteen dollars per capita, while that of the U. S. is but ten dollars.

Our southern neighbors have, as you know, had some unpleasant domestic experiences and other troubles to settle, that Canada has been almost wholly free from. As the result of their civil war in the sixties within seven years in that decade the public expenditure of the north alone was, as you doubtless know, the fabulous sum of 9,000 million dollars, entailing a debt and pension and other obligations that after forty years, costs their citizens annually between two and three hundred million dollars, besides the probable equal cost to the south in cash freeing three million slaves, and the utter devastation of one-third of the whole country then inhabited, and other losses incident to a conflict of such magnitude. But in the latter part of the eighties the country people, and city people also, woke to the fact that most everything about them was going at a fast gait except the country mail service. "It was time for a change," and the R. M. D. agitation was begun and soon the mail man started out upon his blessed mission.

It does not seem to me to be a wise proceeding, however, in order to frighten Canada out of R. M. D. to bring into the controversy ancient American history to prove what wisdom and caution our neighbors to the south



of us exercised in delaying the instituting of R. D. until a recent date. The facts as we find them to-day are the evidences that are worthy of consideration, or of any value. In those early times in the life of the Republic no country on earth, as far as I have been able to discover, had R. D., nor city delivery before the sixties.

You say again: "Will he (Mr. Armstrong) say before the representatives of the Western Provinces, 'you shall not have Free Rural Delivery, but we give it to Ontario and Quebec, where the country is more thickly settled.' Why my honorable friend could not live twenty-four hours in the Post Office Department if he were to propound such a policy." So it seems it has come to pass that West Canada, this child of ours, for whose welfare we in East Canada have expended millions of treasure, have fought and died on the battle-field, in short have set them up in business in such liberal fashion that they have within a few short years been able to acquire wealth and comforts beyond all comparison, have so far forgotten the debt of gratitude they owe us, that they would become so enraged at this proposition that the Postmaster-General would get into the biggest sort of a racket with them, and like as not be shot down in his track or kicked to death, or out of office.

Haunted by visions of such a catastrophe it is likely to be considerable of a job to convince you that Rural Mail Delivery would be a good thing for Canada.

You also tell us, that "we have an area as vast as the U. S." Most everybody knows this, except that in considering R. D., Hudson Bay should be excluded, surely, but it will be news to a lot of people, especially to Uncle Sam, that if the narrow strip of Canada (on an average a hundred miles wide, probably) which is supposed by many well-informed persons to contain about all of its citizens who could reasonably claim "the luxury of R. D.," on the grounds of density of settlement, should succeed in getting Rural Delivery, the population of that vast expanse between this narrow strip and the Arctic Ocean and North Pole are so numerous that in dealing with this R. D. question their case, too, would have to be considered. This is, of course, a most ridiculous view of the situation as respects this comparatively uninhabitable and uninhabited wilderness, but why in discussing R. D. do you persist in taking into account this "vast region," whose climatic conditions and others will forever bar all necessity for R. M. D.

I know a farmer who had unloaded his hay for thirty years with a hand pitchfork, although surrounded by neighbors who were using, for that purpose, horse fork outfits. A year or two ago, however, he purchased this great

labor saver, and was telling me of what a fool he had been all these years when a few paltry dollars' outlay would have landed all this hay, he had pitched, into the hay mow, without hardly an effort on his part.

We may not get R. M. D. now, but "all things come to him who waits," and makes a racket, and then Miss Canada will joyously behold the spectacle of the Free Rural Mail Delivery Man driving up to her mail box at her gate, and she will say to herself what a fool I have been to have tramped millions and millions of miles to and from the country post office when the outlay of a few paltry dollars would have instituted this great convenience years and years ago.

GEO. WILCOX,  
Springford, Ont.

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### Hamilton Spectator.

August 28th, 1908.

Hon. Rodolphe Lemieux at Inverness, Que.:

"It is my aim to establish Rural Mail Delivery, and I hope the time will soon come when farmers will be able to get their mail at their door without the necessity of sending after it to the village post office."

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Sir Wilfrid Laurier,  
Ottawa.

Springford, Ont., Sept. 3rd, 1908.

Dear Premier:

I notice by the newspapers that the Hon. Rodolph Lemieux at Inverness, Quebec, in his speech there said, "It is my aim to establish Rural Mail Delivery, and I hope the time will soon come when farmers will be able to secure their mails at their doors."

In view of the Dominion elections coming off shortly and the position of the two political parties on the R. M. D. question to many true reformers, I have every reason to believe, the parting of the ways are in sight, and they will be compelled to join the party who promised, if placed in power, to immediately institute the great service. Some Conservative newspapers claim that the Postmaster-General, Mr. Lemieux, said at Inverness, "When Quebec secure their mail at the doors," I have been thinking it would quiet the feeling of unrest in the minds of Ontario Liberals and others, if you at

the Niagara Falls meeting on the 15th inst. emphasize what the Postmaster-General really did say when referring to R. M. D. at Inverness. You will doubtless recall receiving letters from me respecting the rural mail service, and also sending to you my compilation book of literature on the subject.

Yours sincerely,

GEO. WILCOX.

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Mr. Geo. Wilcox,

Springford, Ont.

Ottawa, 8th Sept., 1908.

Dear Sir:

I am in receipt of your letter of yesterday, I am in hope that Mr. Lemieux himself will be with me at the Niagara Falls meeting and announce his policy respecting Rural Mail Delivery.

(Signed) SIR WILFRID LAURIER.

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Hon. Rodolphe Lemieux,

Ottawa.

Springford, Sept. 10th, 1908.

My Dear Sir:

You may depend it was good news to a lot of people in Canada when the newspapers reported that at Inverness the other day you announced that you hoped that Rural Mail Delivery would be instituted soon.

I trust you will see your way clear to be at the Niagara Falls meeting to tell the Ontario Liberals who feel that the parting of the ways is in sight, that you intend to give Canada this great blessing.

I expect to be at the Falls meeting and will make myself known to you.

Yours sincerely,

GEO. WILCOX.

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Ottawa, Sept. 12, 1908.

Dear Sir:

I have your letter dated Sept. 10th, and should you be at Niagara on the 15th inst., I shall have much pleasure in meeting you there.

Yours truly,

RODOLPHE LEMIEUX.

To Geo. Wilcox, Esq., Springford, Ont.

## Woodstock Sentinel-Review

Sept. 16th, 1908.

Sees the Realization of a Long-cherished Hope.

Oxford's staunch Rural Delivery Advocate delighted with the announcement made by the Postmaster-General at Niagara Falls. Cordial appreciation shown of the services he had rendered.

Mr. George Wilcox of Springford, was in the city to-day on his way to the London Fair. He attended the great Liberal meeting at Niagara Falls yesterday, and had the pleasure and the satisfaction of hearing the announcement by the Postmaster-General of the Government's intention to establish a system of Free Rural Mail Delivery, covering the whole country. As the readers of the Sentinel-Review are well aware, Mr. Wilcox has been for years a persistent and indefatigable advocate of Rural Mail Delivery, and was naturally deeply interested in the announcement by the Postmaster-General. It is gratifying to learn that Mr. Wilcox's services in the cause of this great undertaking were fully recognized at the Niagara Falls meeting. He was given a place of honor on the platform and in the procession, and was cordially greeted by both Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Hon. Mr. Lemieux.

"I can assure you," said Mr. Wilcox in an interview with the Sentinel-Review to-day, "that I was delighted with the way Rural Mail Delivery was treated at the Laurier Picnic at Niagara yesterday. The Hon. Rodolphe Lemieux announced more fully than he had yet done in any of his speeches that I have noticed, his intentions to institute Rural Mail Delivery immediately, and he was cheered more enthusiastically, I am sure, when speaking on this subject, than were any of the five or six gentlemen who addressed those thousands of people on other political issues in that (taking the Niagara Falls into account) most beautiful park in the Americas.

The drive from the Suspension Bridge Station to the Park that lovely day, our carriages drawn by show-ring four-horse teams, bedecked with gorgeous trappings, flags and bands galore, and thousands and thousands of people in vehicles and on foot, all heading for the great picnic, our carriage and the two ahead showered with flowers by groups of Canada's fairest maidens on stages erected along the ways. Of course, it was Sir Wilfred's show; not mine, much. By order of the master of ceremonies, my son, Carroll Amasa, and I, were occupants of the first carriage after the two in which Sir Wilfred and other members of the Government rode. Upon my making myself known to the Hon. Rodolphe Lemieux, when we met on the picnic grounds platform, he greeted me in the most cordial manner, and grasping



my arm, turned me to face the Premier, saying: "This is Mr. Wilcox, our old Rural Mail friend." Sir. Wilfred evidently considered this situation somewhat ludicrous. Of this his hearty laugh and looks as we shook hands, was proof enough.

**London Free Press.**

Oct., 1908.

**Lemieux to Hear From.**

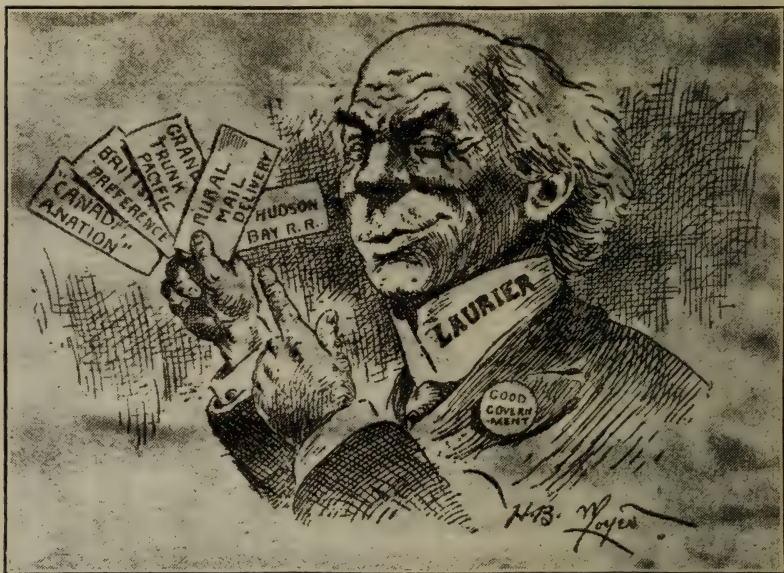
Strange to say, the Dominion Grangers are not deeply smitten with the manner in which the Postmaster-general has proceeded regarding Free Rural Mail Delivery. While commending the policy they, by resolution at the Dominion meeting lately, urged the necessity of going slowly and profiting by the experience of other people who have adopted it. It was pointed out that in the United States a deficit of seventeen millions has resulted this year as a consequence, and it was asked how much deficit a country of seven millions population would have.



**Another Timber Thief.—Toronto News.**

The Dominion grangers entertain doubts on these matters. They evidently do not forget the heavy foot which Hon. Mr. Lemieux planted on

the proposal when it was made by Mr. Armstrong in Parliament, and the minister's distinct refusal to act because of the reason given by him that Rural Free Delivery would be impossible until Canada had twenty million population. They do not clearly understand, for Mr. Lemieux has not explained it, how the measure became suddenly feasible on the eve of the general elections, when he sent post haste to the United States for the boxes needed for the service. As business men, the Dominion grangers would like Mr. Lemieux, or some other minister, to give the ground of this sudden conversion, this hasty scramble to involve the country in an expense which the honorable gentlemen estimated at ten millions annually, which he declared to be beyond the public resources, and which he positively refused to undertake and caused to be voted down.



**The Winning Hand in Canada.**—*London Advertiser, Sept., 1918.*

**First Route Officially Opened in Wentworth—  
Thirty-seven Boxes Up.**

Hamilton, Oct. 10.—Rural Mail Delivery in Canada along existing stage routes was inaugurated between Hamilton and Ancaster to-day on

soil rich in historic interest and typical of older Canada in its comfort, wealth and educational advancement. Nearly two and a half centuries ago LaSalle wandered up Ancaster way in the journey that resulted in his memorable meeting with Joliet before the latter's discovery of the Mississippi. Later came the foundation of Ancaster and the dreams of future greatness, only to be dispelled by the upspringing in turn of Dundas from the Desjardins Canal, and of Hamilton from the coming of the railway. For many years now Ancaster has brooded from her mountain eyrie on her wondrous past, gazing on her greater rivals in the valley below. A little while ago came the steam railway; recently the trolley brought more modernity, and now comes Rural Mail Delivery, the latest word in luxury for farm life.

A red mail collecting wagon of the style familiar to residents of the large cities left the Hamilton post office at 2 o'clock with letters and papers for the people having boxes along the route. This was driven by Captain W. R. Ecclestone, of the Hamilton post office, who will be remembered for his excellent postal work with the Canadian troops in South Africa. No letters were gathered until the 25th box—that of Mr. Walter Vansickle—was reached at the junction of the Dundas and Ancaster roads. Here a simple ceremonial took place, in which the presiding officer was Mr. George Ross, Chief Superintendent of Post Offices for the Dominion, whose energetic hand is in charge of the installation of the Rural Mail Delivery. Mr. Ross, who was accompanied by Mr. Adam Brown, the veteran postmaster of Hamilton, here found quite a gathering of farmers and others.

A proud man to-day is Mr. George Wilcox, of Springford. For years, with tongue and pen, through the press, by means of private correspondence, and otherwise, he has been advocating the cause of Free Rural Mail Delivery. He has encountered many obstacles but has never been discouraged. Even when there was scarcely a glimmer of light ahead, he kept right on. Readers of the Sentinel-Review have been familiar with his work for years. And now that the realization of his great hope is in sight, he is happy. He deserves to be happy.

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And so it came about that on the 10th day of October, 1908, a Rural Mail Delivery wagon left the Hamilton Post Office en route for Ancaster, depositing and collecting the country people's mails between the two places, so the newspapers said. I did not see it myself, though my eyesight then was as good as anybody's. It would have been a great pleasure for me to have witnessed the start in business of what they say is a child of mine.

I wish it to be understood that I do not claim to have been the whole thing in the Post Reform Agitation. The farmers of Canada owe a debt



of gratitude to Joseph E. Armstrong, M.P., for East Lambton, for valuable assistance in Parliament, and to other members as Hansard would show, and to M. S. Schell, then M. P. for South Oxford, who, in party caucus, urged the Government to give the system a trial, and to the newspapers and farm journals who gave space so freely to my manuscripts and to other Rural Mail Delivery campaign literature, and, to also, especially, the Woodstock Sentinel-Review, and the Canadian Dairyman and Farming World.

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Geo. Wilcox, Esq.,

Springford, Ont.

Postmaster-General's Office,

Ottawa, Ontario.

Dear Sir:

Please accept my thanks for your card of greetings on the occasion of the inauguration of the Rural Mail Delivery Service, that carries the mails to and from your farm home daily.

Yours sincerely,

RODOLPHE LEMIEUX.

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#### **Hamilton Herald.**

1909.

George Wilcox, of Springford, Oxford County, is the guest of Samuel and Miss Olive Copp, Mount Royal Ave. Mr. Wilcox is regarded as the father of Rural Mail Delivery in Canada, as it was through his efforts after seeing the system in Michigan, that the late Liberal Government adopted it.

#### **Hamilton Spectator.**

1909.

An interesting visitor in the city for the next few days is George Wilcox, of Springford. Mr. Wilcox is the father of the Canadian Rural Mail Delivery, and is naturally very proud to see the good resulting from the campaign he waged and which has been carried into such excellent effect.

#### **Brantford Courier.**

1909.

Mr. George Wilcox, of Springford, Ont., was a caller at the Courier Office on Saturday. He is called the father of Canadian Rural Mail Delivery. He has a farm in Michigan, and some years ago had occasion to spend two or three summers there. When he came back to Ontario he at once started an agitation to have the system adopted here.

#### **The Globe.**

Mr. George Wilcox, of Springford, Ont., was a visitor at the exhibition yesterday. The name of Geo. Wilcox will always be associated with the inauguration of Rural Mail Delivery in Canada.



**Strathroy Age.**

1910.

Mr. George Wilcox, of Springford, Ont., passed through town last week while on his way to Michigan. It may not be generally known, but nevertheless it is a fact that Mr. Wilcox is the father of the Rural Mail System which has been recently established in this country.

**London Advertiser.**

1910.

Mr. George Wilcox, of Springford, Ont., is the father of Rural Mail Delivery in Canada. Having seen its advantages while in Michigan during two or three summer seasons he undertook a publicity campaign to induce the Government to establish the system in Canada.

**Toronto Daily Star.**

1911.

George Wilcox, of Springford, Ont., owns a farm in Michigan and had occasion to be there for two or three summers and was so impressed by the rural mail delivery there that when he came back to Ontario he at once started an agitation to get the service going in Canada.

**Sarnia Observer.**

1911.

The Observer was called upon to-day by Mr. Geo. Wilcox, who enjoys the distinction of being the first Canadian to advocate through the press the adoption of Rural Mail Delivery in this country.

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House of Commons, Ottawa, Jan 24th, 1913.

Geo. Wilcox, Esq.:

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your card, containing greetings on the establishment of daily Rural Mail Delivery in your section. I often wonder if the people of Canada appreciate as much as they should the good work that you have done for them.

Yours Sincerely,

DONALD SUTHERLAND.

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Premier's Office, Ottawa, January 25th, 1913.

My Dear Sir:

I am in receipt of your favor of the 20th inst., and beg you to receive my thanks as well as my congratulations.

Yours sincerely,

WILFRID LAURIER.

House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario.

My Dear Mr. Wilcox:

Your card received stating that you have at last received your mail delivered at your home gate. May you long live to enjoy the fruits of your labors.

G. E. ARMSTRONG.

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House of Commons, Ottawa, Ont.

My Dear Sir:

Pray accept my congratulations on the establishment of the Rural Mail Delivery Service. Many thanks for postal card that has just reached me.

Yours faithfully,

R. L. BORDEN.

Geo. Wilcox, Esq., Springford, Ont.

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### Opportunity.

The highways were lined with vehicles and people going to the circus. A fellow standing on a soap-box in front of a tent on the outskirts of the town was shouting at the top of his voice, "Come in here and see my monkeys perform." A smart monkey probably, but the people were on their way to a show where there was more to see than a lone monkey's pranks. It was not an opportune time for his business; the campaign for Rural Mail Delivery, however, was in a different fix—the season was opportune. I firmly believe though, as subsequent events make plain, if that opportunity had not been seized upon the country people of Canada would still be putting up the same old tramp to the post office as of yore. Freer trade with the U. S. question and the war would have relegated R. M. D. to the scrapheap for years to come. However, British trade preference, Hudson Bay Railway, St. Lawrence navigation and other public questions was on tap, but by degrees they were sidetracked largely and made to give right of way to the rural post reform, and so in 1908 it became the principal plank in the platform of both political parties, as is obvious by the cartoons and other evidences in this book, and also as readers of the newspapers of those days will recall. It was the trump card sure. Laurier's R. M. D. for a starter proposed to give it only to families living on or near existing stage routes running between the different post offices. Borden was for installing the system up and down the concession in all thickly-settled communities. Borden lost the 1908 election, but in 1911 he and the sort of delivery that I was "putting up a fight" for got their innings.

And to-night as I pen these lines, seven years after, six hundred thousand and more people in the farm homes of Canada will read the newspapers and other mail that the faithful postman has left this day in the mail boxes, standing on the highways of Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and this very day also, if that post service had never been, and every day during this titanic conflict that is dragging thousands and thousands of our fairest sons and daughters into the very jaws of death, anxious mothers and fathers, wives and sweethearts, brothers and sisters, and the people generally, would, in the aggregate, be travelling five hundred thousand miles and more to and from the post offices of Canada for the latest news from the battle-fields athwart the sea.

### **Rural Mail Boxes.**

Directly after the Laurier Government decided to install the new post reform, its Postmaster-General, Hon. Rodolphe Lemieux, went to New York City and gave an order to a firm there for a consignment of rural mail boxes.

If what is said of me, that I was the Generalissimo of the R. M. D. campaign, is a fact, a very natural thing for me to be concerned about was that, keeping reasonable cost in view, the service ought to be best possible. Lemieux's Yankee boxes, big and little, evidently were invented and put on the market, and on the job by people who knew but very little of what a box outfit should be. After making many fool's errands to the Yankee box at my home gate for mail, happening mostly during snow blockades, I resolved to stop all that sort of business. I have in my home here papers containing the signatures of three hundred rural mail carriers at their National Convention, Washington and Detroit, and sixty carriers in Canada, and seven hundred Canadian rural mail patrons, all under the statement that the Wilcox rural mail box outfit is the best adapted to the rural mail service that we have ever seen.

When in 1913 the Ottawa Post Department called for tenders for a supply of rural mail and parcel post box outfits, I offered my invention, accompanied by the list of testimonials, at the price of three dollars each in quantities of 50,000 or 100,000. The New York firm came over to Toronto, organized a company, offered one hundred thousand of their box outfits for 450,000 dollars; they got the contract.

Asked in Parliament why my box was not chosen, Postmaster-General Pelletier said that his deputies who had charge of that department told him that if Mr. Wilcox's box was worth three, the one given the order for was worth six. What he said was reported in the Woodstock Sentinel-Review. The Woodstock Fall Fair was the first opportunity after that to let the public

see for themselves what rural mail box judges they had in Ottawa. At the show I had the contract box and my own invention set up side by side. One hundred visitors at that Fair, mostly all rural mail patrons, signed in the column headed, The Wilcox box outfit is the best adapted for the Rural Mail Service; the contract box column was a blank from top to bottom.

However, although the contract was let I went to Ottawa again, hoping that I could induce the Post Department to have the New York-Toronto firm substitute my invention for the contract one. I succeeded to the extent that they agreed that if the said firm would consent to such change to come back to Ottawa and they would ratify the deal. It was never ratified, for the reason, I am very sure, that my box would cost more to manufacture than would theirs. In addition to the 450-thousand-dollar contract the company agreed to supply one of their contract box outfit to any patron who had one of the small boxes, first put upon the routes, if he would pay to them one dollar and fifty cents, and the little disc, upon which all their make of boxes rest. The Government was to pay another dollar and a half—three dollars in all, and the little disc worth probably 25 cents. Thousands of extra boxes were sold in such way. So it is evident that the box deal took 150 thousand dollars out of the Ontario farmers mostly that good and square business could and should have prevented, and besides put into his hands a box outfit that is a nuisance, as thousands of farmers and carriers all over Canada well know.

And this is not all of it. After the contract was let E. W. Nesbit, M.P. for North Oxford, called for the record of the deal, and he got it, and in it were copies of four or five letters from as many members of Parliament, and also one from the Mayor of a big Canadian city to P.-M.-G. Pelletier saying, "By all means give the box contract to the New York firm, for they are liberal contributors to the Conservative election fund." Donald Sutherland, M.P. for South Oxford, a farmer and a rural mail patron and a Conservative, was not one of that group of fellows. He had seen both inventions and had operated them at various times, and told the Ottawa Rural Mail Department that he considered my outfit the best. As far as I have been able to find out, he was the only rural mail patron in all Canada who had a chance to give his opinion as to the choice, and the same as respects rural carriers. I was told by many people that I was "wasting my fragrance on the desert air" if I depended on good features in a mail box to get me the order. As a sample:—

While the contract was pending a prominent politician, who evidently knew how to get them, as he was in close touch with headquarters, asked



your humble servant what contribution he would give to the Conservative election fund if they gave me the contract. That man is now a court judge and is sending men to penitentiary for life for crimes that are virtues compared with being a party to a system that would ultimately cause "government of the people, by the people and for the people" to perish from the earth.

During my post reform I had many interesting experiences. The day before the Niagara Falls Laurier picnic, 1908, my son Carroll A. and I were doing a stunt in the Hungarian harvest field. We started out next morning and by noon we were on our way from Suspension Bridge G. T. station to the Falls park, as published in the Woodstock Sentinel interview and copied in Hamilton and other newspapers. I have had chats with many prominent men. Been in all the big cities between Buffalo and Washington, my home here and Boston via Montreal. While in Washington showing my box outfit at the Rural Mail Carrier's National Convention, held in the National Museum, I went early one morning to put my box into showing condition for that day, and while at it a very fine-appearing gentleman, clothed in immaculate white, came to where I was and enquired if I had seen anything that morning of the man whose box stood next to mine. I told him I had not. He said that the man wished him to see his exhibit and was to meet him there at that hour. I said do you wish to leave a message for him? Yes, tell him Champ Clarke has been here.

What a thing to do, to not keep an appointment with that distinguished busy man, the Speaker in the U. S. House of Representatives. Upon my fellow box exhibitor's appearance I delivered the message. He was greatly worked up and excitedly said, "I will fix it up with Champ. Champ is an old neighbor of mine up in Wisconsin. I'll make it all right with Champ. That man must have indulged in an overdose of hot Scotch the night before.

During one of my strolls in Washington I noticed a group of people standing near the entrance to the President's mansion. I went up to where they were to see what was going on. They told me their business was to see Mr. Wilson, who in a few minutes came out and started off, his auto passing within eight or ten feet from where I with the other sightseers stood near the curb. With hat off, mine too, he looked this white-haired, wrinkled old fellow square in the face and bowed in a most respectful manner. He took me to be probably an old soldier that had killed a lot of slave-holders on the battle-field in my time. I had seen the President and went my way. In passing the U. S. War Administration Building I noticed two men away up on the steps landing talking. I made out that one was W. J. Bryan. When their talk ended I approached Mr. Bryan and said: I am a stranger in

your city; you seem to me to be an old friend of mine. Do you remember a fellow at the close of your lecture in Woodstock, Canada, coming up to you and saying that he was considerable of a Yankee himself, that he owned a farm in Michigan and had lived there for a time and became so enamoured with Rural Mail Delivery there that upon his return to Canada he started a campaign that resulted in the system being adopted there? I saw immediately that he remembered, for he began to squeeze my hand and put up a real Bryan smile, and said he did remember. He was then U. S. Secretary of War, and, of course, a very busy man, but I could not resist the temptation to take up a few minutes of his time. The man who was talking to Bryan tarried at a little distance off, and as I passed by him he slapped me on the shoulder, and going down the massive steps together he said, "What a memory that man must have; there has been a presidential election since that lecture and he remembered you."

As I look back upon the trail I travelled, not always on the beaten path, there is a satisfaction in the contemplation that during the journey I tarried by the way and done some things that has already made the going easier for thousands and thousands of my fellows, and will, I ween, as the years go by for millions yet unborn.

The End.











